

Bunscoill Rhumsaa

Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Our policy applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- and undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully

Bunscoill Rhumsaa understands that our work in safeguarding and protecting children must always be in line with local guidance and procedures.

BUNSCOILL RHUMSAA CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

Bunscoill Rhumsaa is committed to Safeguarding, promoting the welfare of all its pupils and to protecting them from the risks of harm. All staff and volunteers are expected to share this commitment by demonstrating their understanding of how each individual adult working on behalf of the school has an active part to play in protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare.

* All staff must be clear about their own role and that of others in providing a caring and safe environment for all pupils and know how they should respond to any concerns about an individual child that may arise.

* Bunscoill Rhumsaa will ensure that all staff, whether permanent or temporary, and volunteers know who is the Senior designated person who has overall responsibility for child protection.

* The Designated Person for Child Protection details can be found in this policy.

* All staff will receive training regularly at a minimum of every 2 years in order that they are equipped with the skills needed to keep children safe.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head Teacher, David Jenkins, is the designated person for child protection. In his absence the Deputy Head Teachers, Alex Quane and Kathryn Oates, should be approached.

They are responsible for:

- * co-ordinating action within the school and liaising with the Department of Social Care (DHSC) and other agencies over cases of abuse and suspected abuse.
- * acting as a source of advice within the school
- * ensuring the staff are familiar with the policies and procedures
- * referral of individual cases and suspected abuse
- * liaising with agencies about individual cases
- * organising training on Child Protection within school

Teaching staff and support staff

Any new staff to school will be informed of the main points of this policy and given a copy to read. All staff will require Level 1 training in Child Protection as soon as is possible. Training will be delivered on a 2 year rolling programme.

Staff should report any concerns immediately, to the designated teachers.

Staff should apply the outlined procedures for responding to a suspected case remembering that:

- * you cannot promise confidentiality
- * information should only be shared with those that need to know
- * it is important to stay calm and reassuring
- * the needs and safety of the child must always come first
- * when in doubt - ask

Non teaching staff (including ancillaries, caretakers, cleaners and kitchen staff)

Non-teaching staff may also be approached by children or have concerns. They should follow the same procedures as teaching staff in seeking referral at the earliest opportunity.

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Child Protection - Responding to concerns about individual children

* All children at Bunscoil Rhumsaa must be able to place their trust and confidence in any adult working in the school. They must feel sure that they can speak about any worries or concerns they may have and that they will be listened to, taken seriously and responded to appropriately. All staff must therefore know what to do if a child chooses to talk to them about any matter which raises child protection concerns.

* All staff must:

- Listen to what the child is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions.
- Respect the child's right to privacy but not promise confidentiality
- Reassure the child that h/she has done the right thing in telling.
- Explain to the child that in order to keep him/her safe from harm the information that has been shared with must be passed on.
- Report what has been disclosed to the Designated Person in the school.
- Record, as soon as is practicable, what was said using the child's actual words.
- Sign and date the record.

* The Designated Person/People for Child Protection will:

- Assess any urgent medical needs of the child.
- Consider whether the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- Check whether the child is currently subject to a Child Protection Plan or has been previously subject to a Plan.
- Confirm whether any previous concerns have been raised by staff.
- Consider whether the matter should be discussed with the child's parents or carers or whether to do so may put the child at further risk of harm because of delay or the parent's possible actions or reactions
- Seek advice if unsure that a child protection referral should be made.

* The Designated Person will contact the Child Protection Advisor at the Department of Education and Children and either make a referral to Children and Families Services or, if a referral is not considered appropriate at that stage, make full written records of the information that they have received detailing the reasons for the judgement that the matter was not referred to the local authority.

Child Protection – Recognition and Response to Abuse

* Owing to the nature of the day-to-day relationship children at Bunscoill Rhumsaa have with staff, all working in the school are particularly well placed to notice any physical, emotional or behavioural signs that a child may be suffering significant harm. We understand that harm means the ill-treatment or impairment of a child's health and/or development, including that caused as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person.

* All staff must be alert to any possible indicators that a child is suffering harm and report any concerns to the Designated Person for Child Protection. All staff at Bunscoill Rhumsaa must recognise that it is a statutory duty to ensure that children are protected from harm. We recognise that there are four definitions of child abuse.

The four categories of child abuse are as follows:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Emotional Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse, and
4. Neglect

Physical Abuse

May include: Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, and burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child including the deliberate fabrication or causation of illness in a child.

May be recognised by: Physical injury such as bruising, bite marks, burns and scalds, fractures but also by aggressive behaviour. It may also be an indicator of concern where a parent gives an explanation inconsistent with the injury or gives several different explanations for the injury.

Emotional Abuse

May Include: The persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development, mental health, behaviour and self-esteem. This may be caused by conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or unvalued or by developmentally inappropriate expectations being made or by causing children to frequently feel frightened or the exploitation or corruption of children.

May be recognised by: Developmental delay, attachment issues, aggressive behaviour, appeasing behaviour, watchfulness or stillness, low self esteem, withdrawn or a loner, or having difficulty in forming relationships. Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise as signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. Signs of emotional abuse may be associated or similar to other forms of abuse so presence of emotional abuse may indicate other abuse is prevalent as well. It is not appropriate for any member of staff to undress, photograph or body map any child in an attempt to see physical injury. This is the role of child protection and investigating agencies.

Sexual Abuse

May include: Involving or forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Such activities may involve sexual acts (penetrative or non-penetrative) or may include involving children in watching or taking part in pornographic material or to encourage children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

May be recognised by: Inappropriate sexualised conduct, age inappropriate sexualised play or conversation, sexually harmful behaviour – contact or non-contact, self-harm, eating disorders, continual, inappropriate or excessive masturbation, anxiousness or unwillingness to remove clothes – sports / PE etc, pain or itching in genital area, blood on underclothes, bruising in genital region and / or inner thighs etc.

Neglect

May include: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development (growth and intellect) such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter (including keeping children safe), clothing, or neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

May be recognised by: Being constantly hungry; constantly tired; have a poor state of clothing; be emaciated; have untreated medical problems; be frequently late or have poor or non-attendance at school; have low self esteem; display neurotic behaviour and/or have poor social relationships, have poor personal hygiene. A neglected child may also be apathetic, fail to thrive, or be left with or in the care of adult's under the influence of alcohol or drug misuse.

Safeguarding – Providing a Safe Environment

* All parents and carers of pupils attending Bunscoill Rhumsaa must feel secure in the knowledge that they are entrusting their children to adults who will strive to keep them safe at school. We will do this by:

- Promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within the school
- Ensuring that our staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and child protection according to their role and responsibilities and keep a record of all training undertaken
- Encouraging the self-esteem and self-assertiveness of all pupils through the curriculum so that the children themselves become aware of danger and risk and what acceptable behaviour is and what is not.
- Working in partnership with all other services and agencies involved in the safeguarding of children
- Displaying appropriate posters that detail contact numbers for child protection help-lines
- Welcoming visitors in a safe and secure manner
- Undertaking risk assessments when planning out of school activities or trips
- Ensuring that any community groups which use our premises for the provision of services to children have child protection knowledge and understanding evidenced by a policy or are prepared to adopt our own policy.

Safeguarding & Child Protection in Specific Circumstances

Attendance

We are aware that a pupil's unexplained absence from school could mean that they are at risk from harm.

- (1) We will always report an unexplained absence of a child with a Child Protection Plan to the child's social worker within one day
- (2) We will always seek to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school with the child's parent or carer as soon as is practicable on the first day
- (3) We will always report a continued absence about which we have not been notified by the parent or carer to the Education Welfare Service
- (4) We will always report to the Education Welfare Service the continued absence of a child known or thought to have been taken overseas if the child does not return to school on the expected return date.

Pupil Behaviour

We will always aim to maintain a safe and calm environment by expecting good behaviour from our pupils in line with our behaviour policy.

We are aware that any physical response from a member of staff to a pupil's poor behaviour could lead to a child protection concern being raised by the child or parent/carer.

- (1) No member of staff will use force when dealing with a pupil's breach of our behaviour policy unless the potential consequences of not physically intervening are sufficiently serious to justify such action
- (2) We will always record any occasion when physical intervention has been necessary
- (3) We will always notify parents or carers of any such incident

Bullying

We understand that bullying is harmful to children. We have an anti-bullying policy that sets out our aim of ensuring no child becomes a victim of bullying and the work that we carry out in school to foster an environment where bullying behaviour is known to be unacceptable. We will always take seriously any reports of bullying and respond appropriately.

We understand that bullying can take different forms and may include racist or homophobic behaviour. Any such reported or observed incident will be dealt with in accordance with our anti-bullying policy.

E-Safety

We recognise that children's use of the Internet is an important part of their education but that there are risks of harm associated with its use. We have an e-safety policy and an Acceptable User Policy that addresses how we minimise those risks in school and teach children how to stay safe when using the internet in their lives out of school.

We also recognise that all members of staff and volunteer staff must always be mindful of the need to follow our policy of acceptable use of our ICT equipment.

Guidance on dealing with suspected abuse

All staff should refer concerns to the designated teacher as soon as possible. In the meantime, they should:

- * listen to the pupil, keeping calm and offering reassurance
- * observe bruises but should not ask a child to remove or adjust their clothing to observe them
- * if a disclosure is made the child should lead the discussion. Do not press for details by asking questions
- * Listen - do not investigate. Use questions such as "is there anything else you would like to tell me?"
- * Accept what the pupil says without challenge - reassure them that they are doing the right thing and that you recognise how hard it is for them
- * Don't lay blame or criticise either the child or the perpetrator
- * Don't promise confidentiality - explain that they have done the right thing and who you will need to tell and why

Procedures for monitoring, recording and reporting

At the time

Keep brief notes at the time or immediately after. You should note

- Date and time of disclosure/incident observed
- Place and context of disclosure concerned
- Facts you need to report

When you can

Complete a **Logging a Concern** sheet (buff form from Head Teacher's office). This should be passed to the designated person. In the case of there being bruises or injuries a written description of the location should be made and kept with the Logging a Concern form.

Remember to keep the information factual.

Use the child's own language to quote rather than translating into your own terms. Be aware that these sheets may be used at a later date to support a referral to an external agency.

The Designated Teacher will

Follow-up the referral using the **Logging a Concern** sheet as a basis for consideration before action

Make additional records of discussions and any investigation that take place

Make a decision whether to continue to monitor the situation or take the referral further and communicate this to the individual making the initial referral

Where a child is referred to DHSC the MAAR form should be completed asap

Children with individual files

Children who have been referred to Social Care have their own file which is stored in a secure cabinet in the HT's office. Recorded information from care meetings and other reports are stored in their individual file.

Please note that Logging a Concern sheets NEED to be completed for any incidents/observations regarding children who have individual files.

Working Together with Parents/Carers

Pupil Information

We recognise the importance of keeping up-to-date and accurate information about pupils. We will regularly ask all parents/carers to provide us with the following information and to notify us of any changes that occur.

- names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives
- names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility
- emergency contact details
- details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school (if different from above)
- any relevant court orders in place including those which affect any person's access to the child (e.g. Residence Order, Contact Order, Care Order, Injunctions etc.)
- name and contact detail of G.P.
- any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child

Confidentiality

Information about pupils given to us by the children themselves, their parents or carers, or by other agencies will remain confidential. Staff will be given relevant information only on a "need to know" basis in order to support the child if that is necessary and appropriate.

We are, however, under a duty to share any information which is of a child protection nature. We understand that this is in the best interests of the child and overrides any other duties we have regarding confidentiality and information sharing.

We have a duty to keep any records which relate to child protection work undertaken by us or our partner agencies and to ensure that these are kept apart from the main pupil record, stored securely and only accessible to key members of staff. We also have a duty to send copies of these records to any school to which the pupil transfers.

Referrals to partner agencies

If we have a reason to be concerned about the welfare of a child we will always seek to discuss this with the child's parents or carers in the first instance. On occasion, according to the nature of our concern, it may be necessary for us to make an immediate referral to Children's Services when to do otherwise may put the child at risk of further harm either because of delay, or because of the actions of the parents or carers.

ADULTS WORKING WITH CHILDREN

Allegations against staff

All school staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable that your work with individual children or meetings with parents are conducted in view of other adults.

We will ensure staff are aware of the school's behaviour/discipline policy.

We understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff. If such an allegation is made, the member of staff receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Head/Deputy or the most senior teacher if they are not present.

The Head/Deputies on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the Department of Education and Children's Child Protection Officer.

We recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fails to do so. All staff will therefore be made aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues.

If an allegation is made to a member of staff concerning the behaviour of the Head the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Link Advisor who will consult the Legal Team.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING OUR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Our Designated Person for Child Protection will continually monitor our child protection and safeguarding practices and bring to the notice of the Senior Managers any weaknesses or deficiencies.